

Release Authority

LCDR Dawn Stankus



[PAO@cvn76.navy.mil](mailto:PAO@cvn76.navy.mil)

619-545-4205

## **Ronald Reagan prioritizes diversity and inclusion**

By Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Erica Bechard

NAVADMIN 188/20 "Navy Inclusion and Diversity" was released in June amidst renewed discussions on race in the United States. In a video entitled "It Starts with Us," Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Michael Gilday charged every Navy leader to discuss race relations and inclusion at every U.S. Navy command, saying: "We need to identify what is really happening, understand where barriers exist and listen to all perspectives on how we can bring our unique skillsets together to tackle these issues."

Over the past several months, the team on USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76) have commenced regular open discussion forums focusing on race and diversity in the U.S. Navy of today and tomorrow. Additionally, each month, Ronald Reagan's Diversity Committee commemorates different aspects of culture, ethnicity, history, and remembrance days. Capt. Pat Hannifin, Reagan's commanding officer, addressed the crew following the release of NAVADMIN 188/20, affirming that Reagan's diversity is its greatest strength.

"We are different. We are more than just professional Sailors. We each have individual experiences, intensely personal hopes, dreams, fears, and beliefs," said Hannifin. "We are proud, we are lethal, and we are Reagan-strong. To each and every one of you, I have your back. Your shipmates have your back, both personally and professionally, with zero caveats."

Damage Controlman 1st Class Steven Reedus, Reagan's junior command climate specialist, facilitates a weekly Diversity and Inclusion Open Forum, allowing any Sailor to frankly discuss diversity and inclusion

topics, and share experiences with racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination. Reedus emphasizes how the forums help facilitate a more cohesive and effective team on the ship.

“My Chief [Chief Aviation Boatswain’s Mate (Fuels) Brian Ellis] had the idea to begin this forum as a way to get the conversation going,” said Reedus. “Even if some people don’t have something to say themselves, because not everybody has experienced discrimination, it would at least give them the chance to listen to someone else’s experience and develop empathy.”

“I’ve spoken to other command climate specialists in the fleet, and no one is doing this at the level Reagan is,” said Ellis, Reagan’s senior command climate specialist. “Reagan’s command master chief kicks off every forum, and the commanding officer or executive officer have attended nearly every one.”

Chief Yeoman Richard Anderson, assigned to the embarked staff of Commander Task Force (CTF) 70 and CTF 70’s command manager of equal opportunity, leads a similar discussion forum for strike group Sailors to discuss diversity issues and experiences.

“The discussions we’ve held have yielded great insight into what some of our Sailors have experienced while in the Navy or in life, giving many people a different perspective on these issues,” said Anderson. “I’ve seen changes from the efforts being made, and the biggest of those so far are the continued conversations after the discussion forum. Sailors discussing their takeaways from the event – that is the vital result of these forums.”

In addition to open forums addressing and educating Sailors on diversity issues, Reagan’s Diversity Committee celebrates culture and diversity throughout the ship. Sailors on board come together each month, holding events that commemorate various aspects of diversity in the Navy or throughout history including: Black History Month and Martin Luther King Jr., Hispanic Heritage Month, Asian and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, Native American Heritage Month, Women’s History Month, and many others.

Aviation Ordnanceman 2nd Class Sheila Darden, president of Reagan’s Diversity Committee, gets personal satisfaction from learning about and helping educate Sailors on culture and diversity.

“It’s important to be aware of our individual struggles and experiences because when we understand each other, we are more cohesive. Celebrating diversity is personal to me because I didn’t grow up around much diversity, and I’ve also experienced discrimination,” Darden said. “The Navy sees a problem, and they’re trying to correct it. It makes me feel safe to express myself knowing the Navy has my back. Being able to recognize and appreciate our differences makes our Navy stronger. “Ronald Reagan, the flagship of Carrier Strike Group 5, provides a combat-ready force that protects and defends the collective maritime interests of its allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific.

###